

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8229

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DURBAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 2334

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SF

SUBJECT: DIE TRANSVALER EDITOR COMMENTS ON NEW PRIME MINISTER

1. FOLLOWING ELECTION OF P.W. BOTHA AS NP LEADER AND HENCE PM, CG TAPPED REACTIONS OF WILLEM DEKLERK, SELF-AVOWED VERLIGTE EDITOR OF DIE TRANSVALER DAILY NEWSPAPER IN JOHANNESBURG. OF TWO MAJOR CONTENDERS FOR POSITION OF PM (P.W. AND CONNIE MULDER), DEKLERK SAID HE PREFERRED P.W. BECAUSE HE WAS DEFINITELY MORE VERLIG (ENLIGHTENED) THAN CONNIE. HE BLEIEVED MAIN REASON FOR CONNIE'S DEFEAT WAS DISENCHANTMENT WITH HIS BASICALLY VERKRAMP (CONSERVATIVE) ETHOS, NOT HIS INVOLVEMENT IN INFORMATION OFFICE SCANDALS.

2. DEKLERK WENT ON TO SAY P.W. WAS DEFINITELY MORE FLEXIBLE AND COURAGEOUS THAN VORSTER, WHO HAD BEEN STAND-PATTER FOR SOME TIME. TWO SALUTARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HIS PAST HAD BEEN MULTIRACIALIZING OF DEFENSE FORCES AND FRAMING OF NEW CONSITITUTIONAL PROPOSALS SHARING SOME POWER WITH INDIANS AND COLOREDS. IN THIS LATTER RESPECT, DEKLERK SAID P.W. WAS MAIN ARCHITECT AND DRIVING FORCE, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND HE KNEW P.W. MEANT PROPOSALS ONLY AS FIRST STEP IN FURTHER POWER-SHARING.

3. DEKLERK SAID HE TOOK HEART PARTICULARLY FROM P.W.'S FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT AS NP LEADEER THAT HE WOULD PRESS PARTY'S RACIAL POLICIES "WHATEVER THE CONSEQUENCES." HE SAID EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON LAST PHRASE, BECAUSE HE THOUGHT P.W. WOULD

LEAD, UNLIKE VORSTER.

4. DEKLERK SAID HE THOUGHT PIK BOTHA'S STRATEGY HAD BEEN CLEVER, HANGING IN AS LEADERSHIP CONTENDER TILL HE COULD MAKE HIS SUPPORT COUNT IN FINAL RUN-OFF BETWEEN TWO MAJOR ASPIRANTS. PIK HAD TRIED TO THROW HIS SUPPORT TO P.W. AND HAD SUCCEEDED IN 20 OUT OF 22 CASES. OF 22 VOTES PIK HAD IN OPENING BALLOT, 14 WERE FROM TRANSVAAL, 4 FROM CAPE, AND 2 EACH FROM NATAL AND FREE STATE. DEKLERK THOUGHT PIK WOULD RETAIN FOREIGN MINISTRY PORTFOLIO AND EXERCISE EVEN GREATER INFLUENCE THAN FORMERLY.

5. ONE AREA IN WHICH P.W. PROBABLY WOULD NOT CHANGE POLICY, ACCORDING TO DEKLERK, WAS SWA ISSUE. P.W. HAD SPEARHEADED OPPOSITION TO ACCEPTANCE OF WALDHEIM PLAN, AND ACTUAL SOUTH AFRICAN NEGATIVE REPLY TO UNSYG WAS GENTLER VERSION THAN P.W. LIKED. IT WAS COMPROMISE BETWEEN PIK (LET US KEEP NEGOTIATING) AND P.W. (LET US CLOSE THE DOOR). TECHNICALLY, DOOR REMAINS OPEN, BUT ONLY TECHNICALLY. P.W. IS INTRANSIGENT AND WANTS TO RUN NO RISK OF A SWAPO GOVERNMENT. BUT EVEN DEKLERK ADMITTED THAT P.W. HAD RESPONDED TO ISSUE AS DEFENSE MINISTER AND THAT AS PM HE MIGHT MELLOW. HE THOUGHT P.W. HAD PROMISE OF GROWING IN JOB.

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